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AUTHOR Perry, Linda A. M.
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ABSTRACT

When a communication instructor first taught at a Catholic university, she learned that lecturing was considered the only respected way to teach. Perhaps the reason that lecturing is preferred at Catholic universities is the extant masculine orientation of the Catholic Church and organizations associated with it. At Catholic universities, the most linear, logical, hierarchical (masculine) teaching method, lecturing, is rewarded. The most interactive, facilitative, non-controlling (feminine) method, the facilitative method, is scrutinized. Three primary teaching methods (lecture, interaction, and facilitation) reflect three models of communication (action, interaction, and transaction). The instructor found opportunities to change the perceptions and proscriptions of the university through her directing of the university's internship program, her membership in an ad hoc experiential education committee, and opportunities to team teach. These activities helped bring credibility to alternate teaching methods and contributed to changing the university culture. (RS)

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WHEN EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING IS AN EXPERIENCE

Linda A.M. Perry, Ph.D.

The Department of Communication Studies
The University of San Diego
5998 Alcalà Park
San Diego, CA 92110

(619) 260-4600 X4919

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WHEN EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING IS AN EXPERIENCE[1]

Linda A.M. Perry, Ph.D.
The University of San Diego

As a graduate student, I was taught several methods of teaching. The three primary models were lecture, interactive, and facilitative. The method most emphasized and respected was lecturing. It never occurred to me, however, that there might be a relationship between teaching methods and evaluations of which method is best based on how masculine or feminine it is. Further, I was quite surprised to find that at a Catholic university, if I wasn't lecturing, I wasn't teaching. In this paper, I argue that the reason lecturing is preferred at Catholic universities is because of the extant masculine orientation of the church and organizations associated with it. To support that claim, three primary teaching methods are explored by comparing them to advances in basic communication models. In the process of that comparison, it will be shown that developments in teaching methods move us from primarily masculine (directive) orientations toward more feminine (connective) and androgynous (facilitative) teaching and learning orientations. In concluding, ways to bring some acceptance to the use of facilitative teaching at one Catholic university are discussed. [2]

Teaching at a Catholic University

When I began teaching at a Catholic university, I was concerned that my lack of Catholicity or knowledge about the faith might be problematic. I asked the provost during my interview if this should be a concern. She said it was not, and, for the most part, that has been true. I did not realize, however, that what I would come up against was the notion that unless one is lecturing, one is not teaching and that this belief may stem from the school's Catholicity. One is told in a variety of implicit and explicit ways she is a good teacher only if s/he is lecturing. The first of these implicit messages comes from the architectural design of classrooms.

Structurally, some classrooms in the older buildings on campus say much about what is expected to occur in the classrooms. At the front of the classrooms are ramps on which stationary desks sit backed by blackboards. Based on known strategies for control, teachers using these raised areas immediately move into imposed positions of authority. What these structures also imply is that the teacher is expected to use the ramps, which in many ways limits them to lecturing. After all, one cannot use the blackboard without going up the stairs and it is much too bothersome to climb up and down them when attempting not to use a lecturing style. Thankfully, the university is slowly removing these barriers to effective teaching, which I also see as removing barriers to facilitative learning.

More important than the implicit messages sent by classroom structure, however, are the messages teachers looking hopefully toward tenure receive about classroom conduct. During my first reappointment review, I received the grapevine message that there was some concern about my teaching. The problem, it seems, was that students mentioned class discussion too many times on my Teacher Evaluation Forms for all members of the Appointment, Reappointment, Rank, and Tenure (ARRT) committee to be sure I was teaching and not entertaining. I have received countless messages over the years about lecturing being the appropriate teaching method. Many of these messages were spoken directly to me, and others came as innuendos and implicit rules. That is, even though there is not written rule in the faculty handbook that says one must lecture, that message is received in various other forms. When teaching is the first criterion for tenure at a university, it stands to reason that explicit and implicit messages about how it will be done carry much weight with teachers. The question is, why is lecturing thought to be so important?

After years of working in this environment, I have come to believe that it is the masculine orientation of the Catholic church that results in what is thought to be "good" teaching. The most linear, logical, hierarchical (masculine) teaching method, lecturing, is rewarded; The most interactive, facilitative, non-controlling (feminine) method, facilitative is scrutinized.

Further, working in this environment has made me privy to voiced concerns about the ways in which the Catholic church emphasizes the masculine as central and the feminine as subordinate. In addition, it is almost impossible to read a feminist book without learning about this relationship [See, for example, Morgan (1992).] So, what makes a teaching method masculine or feminine?

Three Teaching Methods

Three primary teaching methods, (lecture, interaction and facilitation), reflect three models of communication, (action, interaction, and transaction). Lecturing, resembling an action model of communication, focuses on the teacher (sender) as most important because s/he has responsibility to shape the lecture (message) such that the student (receiver) can clearly understand it (fidelity). Lecturing is built upon a linear, logical model in which there are "correct" answers, facts, and logical explanations of the universe and what happens in it which only the teacher holds. Thus, this model ignores the possibility of more than one correct explanation of the subject at hand or that a student is as likely as the teacher to discover them. As such, lecturing is based on a masculine model in which the teacher is in a dominant position, higher up the hierarchy than are the students (Gilligan, 1982). Much like a priest at Mass, the teacher stands at the head of the room and guides the followers, students who are there to garnish what they can from this knowledgeable one. The lecturing style is considered most

efficient when there is a lot of information to cover and/or there are a lot of students in the classroom[3]. A teacher is considered effective when students leave the class with enough knowledge to receive a grade of "C" and can advance to the next class. A teacher would be judged as poor if few students could reach this goal or too many students reached beyond it. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) cite Friere when labeling this teaching style as "banking" in which:

> The teacher's role is to 'fill' the students "by making deposits of information which he teacher considers to constitute true knowledge." The student's job is merely to "store the deposits" (p. 214).

The utility of this model is limited because messages (knowledge) are not simply injected into receivers (students). Each student has his or her own frame of reference and perceptual set from which s/he interprets messages. It also ignores the fact that all members in the learning process are equally important.

As students receive messages, they need to clarify the meaning. The quality of learning increases as students become part of the process. For students to be part of the process, they must give the teacher feedback; they must be allowed to ask questions and provide their own interpretations of the lessons as they occur. While this certainly is allowed within the lecturing method, there are clear rules of how and when questioning is appropriate that maintain the dominance of the instructor. An interactive style of teaching, based on the interactive model of communication, is one in which both the teacher and the

student are responsible for learning. Belenky, *et al* (1986) describe interactive teachers as "mid-wife teachers."

> While the bankers deposit knowledge in the learner's head, the midwives draw it out. They assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it (p. 217).

Unlike the action model, the interaction model includes mutual feedback between teachers and students to help clarify messages. Interactive teaching is based on a feminine, "connected" model in which webs of participants generate knowledge. Belenky, et al, (1986) explain that "[w]hen truth is seen as a process of construction in which the knower participates, a passion for learning is unleashed" (p. 140).

The final teaching method, facilitative teaching, reflects the third, transactional communication model. Much like the interactive model, both student and teacher are responsible for learning; both send messages and both receive feedback. In this model, however, the concern is not isolated to learning the material, but includes self-concept development. While messages are being shaped, so are the self-concepts of the teachers and students alike. From an interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1979), facilitative teaching means that course material, teacher, student and the context in which they communicate, coagulate to produce both subject-learning and person-development. For

example, when a student asks a question, the teacher can respond in a variety of ways (Pearson and West, 1991). When a teacher indicates that a student's question is interesting, the student asking it is made to feel intelligent; if the teacher indicates the question is useless, the student asking it is made to feel silly or inadequate. And, when the teacher also asks questions, the students are empowered. When students show respect for the teacher and indicate that they are learning a lot in the context created by the teacher, the teacher's self-esteem and willingness to engage mutually in the learning process increases.

Self-esteem is just one attribute of the self-concept. However, it is a very important part. Self-concept development is significantly different for females than it is for males in relation to classroom experiences. Pearson and West (1991) note,

> Students may learn more about power relationships than subject matter in their interactions with teachers in the classroom. Teachers do not treat males and females similarly, i.e., they evidence bias against women. Countless studies show that when women and men engage in identical behavior, the behavior is devalued for the woman (p. 24).

When the behaviors are devalued, the students' self-concepts are also devalued and become weaker. As pointed out by Stewart, Stewart, Friedley, and Cooper (1990) female students' self-concepts, especially adolescent females, are significantly lower than those of males. Part of the reason for this may be that much primary teaching is based on lecturing and this creates a dynamic in which females have not been socialized to fit. A

facilitative model, however, based on an androgynous orientation toward teaching may help both males and females to learn. Just as an androgynous person is highly masculine (linear, logical, hierarchical, dominant) or highly feminine (circumvent, intuitive, web-like, empowering) depending upon the communication situation, the facilitative teacher is one who uses flexibility by incorporating the teaching method most appropriate to the teaching/learning situation.

Facilitative teaching includes combining lecturing with discussion, in-class learning with service learning, and teacher-centered with student-centered classroom experiences. It is also recognized that more is happening than the teaching and learning of subject matter---so are the teaching and learning of whom the participants are, how they feel about themselves, and, therefore, whom they will become. Thus, facilitative teaching may provide the greatest opportunity for learning course material and developing one's self-concept. But, how does one begin to change the perceptions and proscriptions of a university? I liken it to moving mountains.

Moving Mountains

To move a mountain, one needs many things but above all else, she needs opportunity. Opportunity for me came in three forms, a Communication Studies Internship Program, an Experiential Education Committee, and opportunities to team-teach.

Prior to this semester, I have been the director of our department's internship program. Through this program, students receive credit toward graduation by doing an internship in an outside organization. This program requires students to integrate what they have learned in the classroom to these "work" experiences.[4] For many students, the relationship comes as a surprise. It had been difficult for them to see how the knowledge they were gaining on campus would directly affect the way they interpreted what happened "on the job." This form of learning moved them as far from a lecture format as one can be. As the "instructor" of this course, I also learned that this was an opportunity to make those discoveries part of the internship program. During the required classroom time attached to the program, students discuss their internship experiences with me and each other and daily integrate those experiences with theories and critical methods they have learned in classrooms. However, the external interpretation of this program again was questioned. Why should students receive university credit for, what some labeled, "part-time jobs?" (Note: Students pay for the credits and do not get paid in their internships.) To help clarify how internships work and also to address the questions concerning facilitative teaching, I joined an *ad hoc* Experiential Education Committee (EEC).

The EEC has as it primary focus three areas: Internships (and other for-credit off-campus learning experiences),

facilitative classroom teaching, and in-service learning (working in not-for profit organizations as a unit requirement within a class). Each of these foci depends on teacher and student flexibility and sharing of the responsibility for learning. Most important to the present discussion, however, is that it provides those of us who want to move beyond lecturing opportunities to gain some understanding and acceptance by those whose preference was lecturing. While I will not cover all that working on the committee entails, I will briefly overview those things that I believe changed the minds of some campus members about the value of facilitative teaching.

First, we asked the faculty responsible for internships and other off-campus courses to meet with us to create a handbook in which all such courses, their requirements, and restrictions are discussed. Part of this process was dedicated to structuring the requirements so that there was consistency across disciplines without creating rigid rules; part of the process was to share information about the compensation (or lack thereof) each faculty member receives for their work (some receive none, others receive course release time after X number of internships, and still others teach it as part of their course load).

Next, we created a brochure that discusses what internships and volunteer opportunities are available across campus as a way of explaining, legitimizing and advertising these opportunities. And, finally, we offer on-campus workshops during which we

demonstrate in-class methods of facilitative teaching (group exercises, dyad projects, fish bowl experiments, and so forth). As Bowker and Dunkin (1992) explain, "Using small groups, dyads, and class discussions as avenues to knowledge helps the professor---to link the students *with* the topic rather than lead the student *to* the topic" (p. 266). We invite faculty and administrators so that they can begin to understand the academic strength of these methods and so that they can use them themselves if they decide to do so. To provide more credibility to the committee and for what it stands, we petitioned the university to move it from *ad hoc* to a standing status. We were granted that request along with a budget that helps us to keep all of the aforementioned up to date and advancing.

The final opportunity for me to "move the mountain" came through a cluster preceptorial program offered by the university. The preceptorial program is set up so that teachers act as academic and "socializing" advisors for first year students. Each professor also teaches a general education course in which these same students are enrolled. For several years the university has enhanced this program by offering a few "cluster" preceptorial sections in which up to five professors from different fields team-teach a class that focuses on an area of mutual interest. I participated in this program for several years with an English professor, a sociologist, and a philosopher, in a cluster preceptorial that focused on gender

issues. Besides the joy of learning from my peers, it was an opportunity to see varying teaching methods at play. While we blended teaching styles in the context of this class, we also had opportunities for direct feedback about our teaching, and gained skills that we took into our other singularly taught classes. Most importantly for me, however, were the friendships that grew from the experience of having my teaching methods and myself validated by other members of the team. Another outcome was that this class eventually became the introductory class for our new Gender Studies minor program.

Conclusion

When I first taught at a Catholic university, I learned that lecturing was the only respected way to teach. After much thought, I concluded that this notion was part of the male-orientation of the Catholic Church and organizations associated with it. I and many of my peers believed this orientation could change and went about finding ways to do so. Offering Internship programs, creating and maintaining an Experiential Education Committee and having team-teaching opportunites helped to bring credibility to alternate teaching methods and contributed to changing the university culture. As a new member of the Appointment, Reappointment, Rank and Tenure Committee, I was not surprised when another member said when discussing a reappointment candidate that her teaching was commendable because "She doesn't just lecture."

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Endnotes

1. Some of this argument appears in the handouts for the SCA short course, "Sex Stereotypes and Expectations: Classroom and Campus Strategies for Change" presented by Linda A.M. Perry and Phil Backlund. Dr. Perry is the sole author of that handout and this paper, however.

2. Although my perspective is based on my personal experience at one university, I suggest that this phenomenon occurs at other places, catholic and non-catholic. In addition, I do not mean to suggest that this limitation occurs at <u>all</u> Catholic universities. Finally, I want to make it clear that much has changed, and is changing, at USD. The problems with which I initially was met have shifted in the process of some self-reflection by those at the university prior to my arrival, the retirement of numbers of people who held tightly to the belief that lecturing was the only form of "real" teaching, and by movement through long-range plan development and execution.

3. This is much like the argument that directive leadership should be used when the group is large and/or the task is complex.

4. Students must have a minimum GPA of 2.8 and be at least second semester Juniors to participate in the program. These guidelines were created for several reasons. The GPA requirement is important because it protects students who may want to have the opportunity but not have the ability to keep up or improve their extant GPA (The time and flexibility demands of an internship are greater than those required of typical classroom experiences). It also provides an incentive for majors to increase their GPAs prior to their Junior year. And, finally, it insures us that we are sending good representatives of the university out into the community. The second semester Junior requirement is included so that students have the educational background to best connect internship and on-campus educational experiences.